

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A flexible shaft, comprising:
a flexible, elongated outer sheath;
at least one drive shaft disposed within the outer sheath; and
a moisture sensor disposed within a coupling connected to an end of the outer sheath configured to communicate sensor data corresponding to the presence of moisture within the outer sheath.
2. (Original) The flexible shaft according to claim 1, wherein the outer sheath is autoclavable.
3. (Original) The flexible shaft according to claim 2, wherein the outer sheath includes a fluoropolymer/silicone material.
4. (Currently Amended) The flexible shaft according to claim 1, further comprising:
~~a coupling connected to an end of the outer sheath; and~~
a memory unit disposed in the coupling.
5. (Original) The flexible shaft according to claim 4, wherein the memory unit stores data including at least one of serial number data, identification data and usage data.
6. (Original) The flexible shaft according to claim 5, further comprising:
a data transfer cable disposed within the outer sheath, wherein the memory unit is logically and electrically connected to the data transfer cable.
7. (Currently Amended) The flexible shaft according to claim 1, ~~further comprising:~~

~~a coupling detachably connected to an end of the outer sheath, wherein the coupling being is configured to detachably couple to a surgical attachment.~~

8. (Original) The flexible shaft according to claim 7, wherein the detachable coupling includes a locking mechanism for detachably coupling to the outer sheath.

9. (Original) The flexible shaft according to claim 8, wherein the locking mechanism includes a flexible strip locking mechanism.

Claim 10. (Canceled).

11. (Currently Amended) A flexible shaft, comprising:
a flexible, elongated outer sheath;
at least one flexible drive shaft disposed within the outer sheath;
a coupling connected to a distal end of the outer sheath configured to couple to a surgical attachment; and
a moisture sensor disposed within the coupling ~~outer sheath~~ configured to communicate sensor data corresponding to the presence of moisture; ~~and~~
~~a coupling connected to a distal end of the outer sheath configured to couple to a surgical attachment.~~

12. (Original) The flexible shaft according to claim 11, wherein the outer sheath is autoclavable.

13. (Original) The flexible shaft according to claim 12, wherein the outer sheath includes a fluoropolymer/silicone material.

14. (Original) The flexible shaft according to claim 11, wherein the coupling includes a locking mechanism so that the coupling attaches and detaches to the outer sheath.

15. (Previously Presented) The flexible shaft according to claim 14, wherein the locking mechanism includes a flexible strip locking mechanism.

16. (Original) The flexible shaft according to claim 11, wherein the coupling includes a connection mechanism configured to detachably couple to the surgical attachment.

Claims 17 and 18. (Canceled).

19. (Currently Amended) The flexible shaft according to claim 11, wherein the moisture sensor ~~is disposed in the coupling and~~ is configured to detect moisture in one of the coupling and the outer sheath.

20. (Previously Presented) The flexible shaft according to claim 11, further comprising:

a memory unit disposed within one of the outer sheath and the coupling, the memory unit configured to store data.

21. (Previously Presented) The flexible shaft according to claim 19, wherein the memory unit stores data including at least one of serial number data, identification data and usage data.

Claims 22 to 36. (Canceled).

37. (Currently Amended) A flexible shaft, comprising:

a flexible, elongated outer sheath;

at least one drive shaft disposed within the outer sheath;

~~a moisture sensor disposed within the outer sheath configured to detect moisture within the outer sheath; and~~

a coupling detachably connected to an end of the outer sheath, the coupling being configured to detachably couple to a surgical attachment, wherein the coupling includes an engagement shaft including grooves and a clip having flanges, the flanges being received in longitudinal slits of a hollow engagement member of a surgical attachment, the engagement shaft being received in the clip, the clip engaging the grooves; and

a moisture sensor disposed within the coupling configured to detect moisture within the outer sheath.

38. (Currently Amended) A flexible shaft, comprising:
a flexible, elongated outer sheath;
at least one flexible drive shaft disposed within the outer sheath; and
a coupling connected to a distal end of the outer sheath configured to couple to a surgical attachment, wherein the coupling includes a connection mechanism configured to detachably couple to the surgical attachment, wherein the connection mechanism includes an engagement shaft having grooves and a clip having flanges, the clip being configured to be received in a hollow engagement member of a surgical attachment, the flanges of the clip configured to engage in longitudinal slits of the hollow engagement member, the clip configured to receive and secure the engagement shaft in the hollow engagement member, and to frictionally engage with the grooves of the engagement shaft;
wherein the coupling further includes a moisture sensor.

39. (Previously Presented) The flexible shaft according to claim 38, wherein the connection mechanism includes a hollow engagement member having longitudinal slits and a clip having flanges, the clip being disposed in the hollow engagement member, flanges of the clip engaging in the longitudinal slits, the clip configured to receive and secure an engagement shaft of a surgical attachment.

40. (Currently Amended) A shaft, comprising:
an elongated outer sheath;
at least one drive shaft disposed within the outer sheath; and
a moisture sensor disposed within a coupling connected to an end of the outer sheath configured to communicate sensor data corresponding to the presence of moisture within the outer sheath.

41. (Previously Presented) The shaft according to claim 40, wherein the shaft is rigid.

42. (Previously Presented) The shaft according to claim 40, wherein the shaft is at least one of articulable and articulatable.

43. (Previously Presented) The shaft according to claim 40, wherein the outer sheath is autoclavable.

44. (Previously Presented) The shaft according to claim 40, wherein the outer sheath includes a fluoropolymer/silicone material.

45. (Currently Amended) The shaft according to claim 40, further comprising:
~~a coupling connected to an end of the outer sheath; and~~
a memory unit disposed in the coupling.

46. (Previously Presented) The shaft according to claim 45, wherein the memory unit stores data including at least one of serial number data, identification data and usage data.

47. (Previously Presented) The shaft according to claim 45, further comprising:
a data transfer cable disposed within the outer sheath, wherein the memory unit is logically and electrically connected to the data transfer cable.

48. (Currently Amended) The shaft according to claim 40, ~~further comprising:~~
~~a coupling detachably connected to an end of the outer sheath;~~ wherein the coupling is being configured to detachably couple to a surgical attachment.

49. (Previously Presented) The shaft according to claim 48, wherein the detachable coupling includes a locking mechanism for detachably coupling to the outer sheath.

50. (Previously Presented) The flexible shaft according to claim 1, wherein the moisture sensor communicates the sensor data via a data transfer cable.

51. (Previously Presented) The flexible shaft according to claim 1, wherein the moisture sensor comprises a board element, a first lead, and a second lead, the first lead and the second lead printed on the board element, the electrical resistance between the first lead and the second lead varying in accordance with an amount of moisture present.